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I Remember the Dark Glasses: A Poem By Lewis Hamilton

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FOUR HAIKU BY JOHN E. L. ROBERTSON

Plows slice softened sod;
Plants freshen up with showers.
God is a bunny.

Beer buried in ice;
Sun worshippers sweat and fan;
Black bad; not so tan.

Leaves russet and sere;
Bowls heaped with football and cheer --
Go worship the Bear.

SOUTHERN COURTHOUSES

Whittle, spit and joke--
Pale loungers sun, lizard-like.
Justice once was white.

A POEM BY LEWIS HAMILTON

I REMEMBER THE DARK GLASSES

I remember the dark glasses he wore, because he was blind--
And the red handkerchief he tied over his eyes in the winter
To keep out the cold
When he went out to help milk the cows
Or cut wood for the iron stove.

I recall the home-made hickory cane
He used to follow the wires to the out-buildings
And the hot water he drank for breakfast
Because he thought it was good for him.
He used to sit in an old home-made rocking chair
Opening and closing a pen-knife--
Click, Click, Click,
And sucking on a hollow tooth all the time
Making the sound hollow teeth make when they're sucked on.
He read the Reader's Digest and the Bible in braille
And listened to the battery radio
With the magic-eye tuning they bought from Sears-Roebuck
And prophesied war with Japan
But died before it happened.
He plucked a red and green guitar
And sang the old ballads that made everyone cry.
Sometimes he let me listen to the spring-wind phonograph--
Denver Darling, Gene Autry, and Jimmie Rodgers, the "Yodeling
Brakeman,"
And though I never could understand them,
He always laughed at the two Black Crows,
Even if he could say the whole thing from memory.
He died in the winter time.
A blacksmith made the casket.
The upholstery--black on the outside and white on the inside--
Cost twenty-five dollars.
There were the right number of thumbscrews on the flat lid.
The funeral was in the church
Where his children went to grammar school.

We sat on the home-made pews
Carved with pen-knives--notches, initials,
And in the back, a few vulgar signs.
The blacksmith and some of the other neighbors--
I guess they're all dead now--I know the blacksmith is--
Moved the lid crosswise so we could pass by
And see the dark glasses.
His wife fumbled under them and picked the penny
From the one eye that wouldn't stay closed by itself
And gave it to me--I guess I lost it. I didn't want it.
She took the glasses off too.
At the grave, the casket was set on two carpenter's saw horses.
They took pictures. I don't know why.
(I remember a family who had pictures
Of their dead in the bedroom.
I wondered how they slept there.
We used to think more of the dead, I guess,
But spent less on them.)
They lowered the casket into the grave on two leather lines--
The kind used to guide a team of horses--
And put the lid on the outside box
Made of Number One pine.
They filled the grave
And mounded it up, because all the dirt wouldn't fit.
A year later, it was flat and caved in
As the boards beneath gave way. Now
There's just the bones and the buttons--
I guess one of his children has the dark glasses.